The Philippine Department of Tourism
Official Newsletter

Special Edition : June 2023
Vol. 6, Issue No. 6

on the DOT

DOT LAUNCHES LOVE THE PHILIPPINES CAMPAIGN

(Story on page 12)

P 10
PHL elected UNWTO General Assembly VP, nabs Commission for East Asia and the Pacific Chairmanship

P 14
Golden Year for Philippine Tourism

P 18
The DOT's Philippine Experience Program kicks off in Davao; touts readiness of Mindanao for tourism

Frasco leads Moalbal, Cebu dive audit, consults local stakeholders

Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco arrives in Moalboal, Cebu last June 23 to lead the Department of Tourism's (DOT) conduct of a dive product audit activity as part of the ongoing effort to further strengthen the country's dive industry and offerings.

The DOT Chief is welcomed by Moalboal local government officials led by Municipal Mayor Innocentes Cabaron, officers of the Moalboal Dive Association (MDA), and other tourism stakeholders.

Before the dive product audit activity, the Secretary had a brief talk with local dive operators to inform them of the post-pandemic tourism plans and priorities under the Marcos administration, which includes strengthening tourism products including dive.

Also with Secretary Frasco are Undersecretary Shahlimar Hofer Tamano, Undersecretary Ferdinand Jumapao, Director Judilyn Quiachon, Director Ronald Conopio, and Head Executive Assistant Glenn Albert Ocampo.

No less than Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, who sits as the chairman of the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD) and the newly-created DOT DIVE Committee, led the activity in a show of support to Moalboal's tourism recovery and energetic dive scene.

In employing a "coordinated, focused, and fully supported approach" towards the further development of dive products across the country, the Dive Committee–an inter-agency panel composed of the DOT, the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), and the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD)–is tasked with the coordination and establishment of a network for the implementation of all programs and activities, and the promotion of diving and other related activities.

The DOT is also continuous in its promotions of Philippine dive offerings to key markets through efforts such as participation in key dive events abroad, one of which is the Diving, Resort, and Travel (DRT) Show held last February 24-26 in Malaysia where the Philippines was awarded as the Best Dive Destination.

The Philippines also bagged the title as the World's Leading Dive Destination at the prestigious World Travel Awards (WTA) in 2022. This year, it is also defending its standing as Asia's Leading Dive Destination at the WTA, a title that it has held for four straight years from 2019 to 2022. ***DOT***

on the DOT: Staff

On the DOT is published by the OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ADVOCACY

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The country's colorful marine life takes the spotlight in DOT's Anilao Underwater Shootout

Amateur and professional underwater photographers beautifully captured the teeming marine biodiversity of Anilao in the entries to the 8th Anilao Underwater Shootout (AUS) mounted by the Department of Tourism (DOT) last May 22 to 26.

The "World Cup of Underwater Photo Competitions" highlighted the town's rich biological treasures, including its waters carpeted with colorful nudibranchs.

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said the event strengthens the country's position as the world's leading dive destination.

Through the competition, the DOT seeks to grow the country's dive market with programs that not only promote the country's marine biodiversity but also actively advocate for its protection and preservation.

"The department is dedicated to ensuring that the Philippines maintains its standing as the world's leading dive destination through a coordinated, focused, and fully supported approach to the further development of our dive products across the country," Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said.

Gathering a total of 153 participants from 14 countries—including Australia, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Turkey, and the United States—the event also spurred tourism activity in Anilao.

"The presence of international participants at the Anilao Underwater Shootout is a big boost to the promotion of dive tourism in the Philippines, and also to the rebooting of the travel and tourism industry. We are thrilled that the passion for diving and underwater photography has brought everyone to Anilao as this year's edition welcomes international participants for the very first time since the pandemic," the Secretary added.

This year's esteemed panel of judges includes award-winning underwater photographers Aaron Wong, Brook Peterson, Franco Banfi, Rafael Fernandez Caballero, and Scott Gutsy Tuason.

This year's edition garnered a total of 426 entries across the competition's 14 categories. Winners were awarded 1.7 million pesos worth of underwater photography gear from event partners and sponsors AOI, Divers Point Co., Fourth Element, Marelux, Migalabs, Nauticam, Nautilus Dive and Sports Center, Raptor Case, Scubalamp, Scuba Studio, Squires Sports, and XDeep.

In the Open Class, Macro/Supermacro category, winners are Kim Kyung Shin, 1st place; PJ Aristorenas, 2nd place; Yat Kuen Eric Fung, 3rd place.

In the Marine Behavior category, winners are Dennis Corpuz, 1st place; Patricia Santos, 2nd place; Yat Kuen Eric Fung, 3rd place.

In the Nudibranch category, winners are Dennis Corpuz, 1st place; Mark Chang, 2nd place; PJ Aristorenas, 3rd place.

In the Fish Portrait category, winners are Deniz Muzaffer Gökmen, 1st place; Patricia Santos, 2nd place; Mark Chang, 3rd place.

In the Compact Class, Macro category, winners are Regie Casia, 1st place; Luzelle Artillero, 2nd place; Teresa Sy Ortin, 3rd place.

In the Marine Behavior category, winners are Regie Casia, 1st place; Eric Javier, 2nd place; Neil Anthony Torres, 3rd place.

In the Nudibranch category, winners are Jayson Cedrick Apostol, 1st place; Ronilo Corpuz, 2nd place, Jose Antonio Caluag, 3rd place.

In the Fish Portrait category, winners are Eric Javier, 1st place; Jayson Cedrick Apostol, 2nd place; Oscar Rey Maranan, 3rd place.

Special prizes were awarded to Dennis Corpuz in the Blackwater/Bonfire category and Mark Chang in the Wide-Angle category.

Eric Javier was awarded the DOT Photographer Year title for the Compact class while Kim Kyung Shin took the DOT Photographer of the Year for the Open class.

Meanwhile, Louie Casapao and Roberto Corpuz were named DOT Photographers of the Year Dive Guide for the Compact and Open classes respectively.

The Anilao Underwater Shootout has been organized by the DOT since 2013, in line with the identification of diving as a priority tourism product in the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP).

The 8th Anilao Underwater Shootout was mounted in partnership with Mabini Tourism, DOT Region 4A CALABARZON #DiscoverCalabarzon, Solitude Acacia Resort, Aiyanar Beach and Dive Resort, and Lakan. The event is also supported by Underwater 360 and Dive Marketing Media. ***DOT***

Philippines wins Emerging Muslim-friendly Destination of the Year Award (Non-OIC)

The Philippines has been awarded as the Emerging Muslim-friendly Destination of the Year at the prestigious Halal in Travel Global Summit 2023 last June 1 in Singapore, Tourism Secretary Christina Frasco announced.

The Halal in Travel Global Summit 2023 recognizes destinations, organizations, companies, and individuals who have made a significant impact on the Muslim lifestyle travel segment.

The Emerging Muslim-friendly Destination of the Year (non-OIC) award is given to recipient destinations that cater to the unique needs and preferences of Muslim travelers.

The Muslim travel market is foreseen to significantly propel the tourism industry's growth with projections that Muslim traveller arrivals will reach 140 million in 2023 and in succeeding years could reach 230 million with estimated expenditures of USD225 Billion by 2028.

"This award is an affirmation of our collaborative efforts towards positioning the Philippines as a preferred destination for Muslim travelers, and strategically developing our Halal Tourism portfolio across our regions. This global recognition also opens up enormous opportunities for our country to introduce our rich and diverse culture and heritage evident in our Muslim communities, and our immensely beautiful destinations, including Mindanao," Secretary Frasco said.

According to Secretary Frasco, the Department of Tourism has focused on developing the country's halal tourism portfolio ensuring, among others, its prioritization in the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023-2028.

The DOT has also implemented a wide range of services and amenities designed to cater to Muslim travelers. These include the conduct of a comprehensive inventory of Halal-certified dining options and the pursuit of increased Halal accreditations for tourism enterprises across the country, as well as the conduct of Halal Awareness Orientations with Tourism Stakeholders, and information dissemination with tourism enterprises on the values, beliefs, and practices of Muslim-travelers.

Recognizing global trends and preferences of Muslim travelers, Secretary Frasco said that the Department of Tourism has also continued to pursue its sustainable tourism development initiatives, and recently inked a significant agreement with global health and wellness tourism leader Agora to position the Philippines towards providing quality medical and wellness tourism offerings especially to the Middle Eastern market.

It will be recalled that early this year, the Department of Tourism organized the very first Mindanao Tourism Expo. This was followed by the successful MICECON in Davao jointly organized by the DOT, Tourism Promotions Board, and the private sector and City of Davao. Secretary Frasco also recently led the Mindanao Tourism Convergence held in Zamboanga City in collaboration with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the Department of National Defense (DND).

Undersecretary Myra Paz Valderrosa-Abubakar accepted the award on behalf of the Department of Tourism and CrescentRating and HalalTrip, for recognizing the efforts of the Philippine government and tourism stakeholders.

"We hope to continue the great stride on tourism promotion and economic boost in our country for our Muslim brothers and sisters who are arriving in the Philippines and who are surely welcome to visit and explore our more than 7,000 islands with majestic white sand beaches and warm people," Undersecretary Abubakar said. **DOT**

DOT supports Malacañang Heritage Tours

MANILA, Philippines - The Department of Tourism (DOT) welcomes and supports the opening of three mansions in the Malacañang complex to the public.

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco expressed her support for the Malacañang Heritage Tours, saying

"The Department of Tourism welcomes and extends its full support for the Malacañang Heritage Tours, initiated by our First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos. We thank our First Lady for this remarkable initiative which provides local and foreign tourists a profound glimpse into our history, culture, heritage, and tradition."

The Malacañang Heritage Tours includes three historical structures in the Malacañang compound: Bahay Ugnayan, the Teus Mansion, and the Goldenberg Mansion.

At Bahay Ugnayan, visitors and museum enthusiasts will be able to witness President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s journey to the presidency, while the Teus Mansion holds the memorabilia of past Philippine presidents that were previously shown in the Kalayaan Hall presidential museum and library.

Meanwhile, the century-old Goldenberg Mansion is now commercially available for events.

The project, Secretary Frasco said, highlights the Marcos administration's recognition of Philippine heritage, tradition, and culture as invaluable components of the successful transformation of the tourism industry.

The Malacañang Heritage Tours is open to the public for free starting June 1, 2023 from Tuesdays to Sundays from 9AM to 4PM. Reservations may be made through sosec@malacañang.gov.ph. **DOT**

Photo courtesy of Presidential Communications Office

TWG convened to drive up CRK utilization; travel and tourism to remain 'spark of hope' for Clark – Secretary Frasco

The Department of Tourism (DOT), led by Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, together with the Department of Transportation (DOTr) convene with members of the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) Technical Working Group (TWG) last June 1 to map out strategies that will enhance the utilization of the Clark International Airport (CRK).

Delivering her opening message at the meeting, Secretary Frasco, who sits at the CAB Board as its Vice Chairperson, emphasized the importance of fully supporting Clark as the next major gateway of the country as this would greatly increase domestic and international tourism in Northern and Central Luzon.

"Whether by air, by land, or by sea, the first and last impression that we give to our tourists and travelers is important. And that is why, our President has directed the enhancement of our gateways on one hand, and on the other hand, to ensure that we fully open up the Philippines to tourism and travel by ushering in the resumption of international flights as well as domestic flights, and the addition of more routes, especially and including to and from Clark," Secretary Frasco said.

In fulfillment of the vision of President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. for the Philippines to take a primary position as a tourism powerhouse in Asia and in the world, the DOT under the leadership of Secretary Frasco has identified the improvement of tourism infrastructure and accessibility as among its seven main objectives.

"I am very grateful to the Department of Transportation for our collaboration that began very early on in the Marcos Administration, upon the directive of our President, to give attention to one of the most essential components of tourism and travel in the Philippines, our gateways," Secretary Frasco said.

Representing DOTr Secretary Bautista at the meeting, Undersecretary Roberto C.O. Lim shared that Clark, including the CRK, has come a long way from its humble beginnings, and said that *"It was not a very smooth travel, there were ups and downs in trying to move the aviation community outside of Manila. It was a question of mindset, it was a question of infrastructure, it was a question of general economic development that one could argue was just not in place."*

"The airlines are here now and as you can see, last month in April, they've launched several flights both domestic and international. We have to make sure they don't leave Clark empty. So, we ask all of you, let us make sure we support the carriers not only in the air but in the integrated local plan coming from the local communities, coming from integrated tourism plan on ground. I think a good measure to assess whether we are progressing well is to take the case of an individual traveler who arrives in Clark. He should be comfortable enough to find his way travelling alone from the time he lands and exits the airport, there must be land transportation, signs, tourism programs, and all other packages that will make it easy for him to move around," the Undersecretary said.

The CAB with the Department of Transportation (DOTr) as chair, the DOT, Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA), Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP), Clark International Airport Corporation (CIAC), Luzon International Premier Airport Development (LIPAD), other concerned government agencies, and private stakeholders comprised the TWG. It was formed to maximize the potential and efficiency of CRK as a key aviation hub, as well as address various challenges and opportunities associated with the operations and development of the airport.

Tourism boost seen with push for Clark as next major gateway

Recalling the Luzon leg of her listening tours held last year in Clark where stakeholders have manifested the need for collaboration and support in terms of boosting the arrivals to CRK, Secretary Frasco expressed her optimism with the upcoming plans of Clark, saying that its *"journey towards becoming a major gateway has already commenced."*

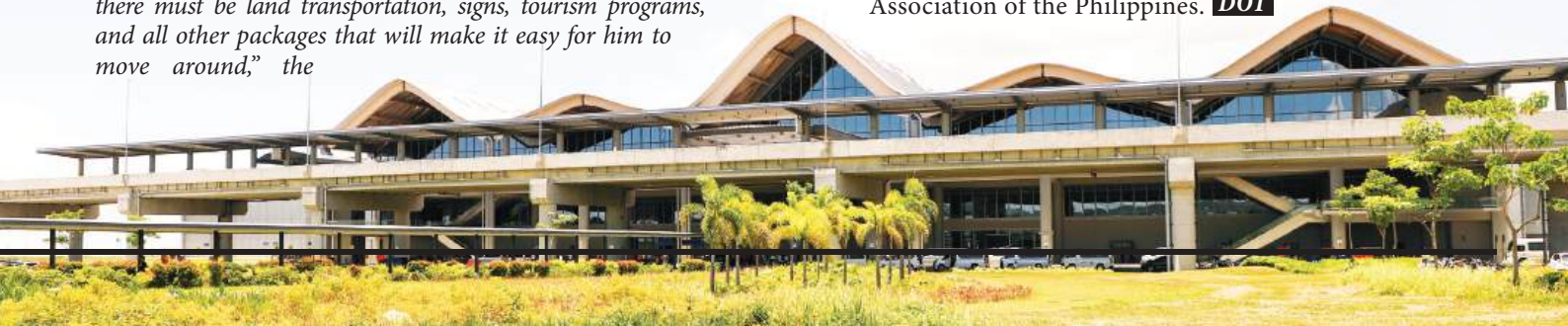
Secretary Frasco also noted that Clark already has the infrastructure, only that there is a need to fully maximize and coordinate all the feeder services surrounding the airport. *"And this is where our local government units are very important and critical, recognizing that beyond CDC, of course, is the territorial jurisdiction of our mayors and governors,"* Secretary Frasco said.

The DOT chief also announced the upcoming launch of the Philippine Experience in Region 1 by July this year; in CAR by October; in Region 3 by December; and in Region 2 by early next year. The DOT's Tourist Lifecycle App, which will provide information to tourists on all the country's regions and tourism offerings, will be released in mid-2023.

Expressing her optimism towards Clark and the CRK, Secretary Frasco said *"There's much to hope for Clark, and we in the DOT will continue to support all your efforts to ensure that travel and tourism continues to be a spark of hope for Clark."*

Joining Secretary Frasco, other DOT officials, and DOTr Undersecretary Lim are BCDA Senior Vice President Arrey A. Perez, CAB Executive Director Carmelo L. Arcilla, CAAP Deputy Director General Atty. Danjun G. Lucas, Clark Development Corporation (CDC) President CEO Atty Agnes VST Devanadera, CIAC President and CEO Engr. Joshua M. Bingcang, and LIPAD CEO Noel F. Manankil.

Also present are local government officials from the Provinces of Pampanga and Tarlac, Angeles City, municipality of Capas in Tarlac, regional officers of the Bureau of Immigration, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Subic-Clark Alliance for Development (SCAD) as well as representatives from the private sector including the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Philippines, Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific, Air Asia, Air Swift, Korean Airlines, Royal Air, Airline Operator Council, Board of Airline Representatives, and the Air Carriers Association of the Philippines. ***DOT***



DOT commits full support on Laguna's local tourism resurgence; vows for more tourism projects in the province

Pagsanjan, Laguna - The Department of Tourism (DOT) last June 6 committed its full support to strengthen the local tourism industry of Laguna, as well as in the protection and preservation of the Pagsanjan Gorge National Park (PGNP) where the famed Pagsanjan waterfalls can be found.

Spanning across Pagsanjan, Cavinti, and Lumban, the PGNP is one of the oldest national parks in the country. The national park is also a declared a protected area, covering approximately 152 hectares around a series of gorges on the Pagsanjan River leading to the famed Pagsanjan waterfalls which can be seen in between lush landscape and towering cliffs accessible only by dugout canoe.

Last June 6, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco joined the local chief executives of Pagsanjan, Cavinti, and Lumban in the signing of the tripartite agreement aimed at uniting the stakeholders of the world-renowned Pagsanjan Falls to reinvigorate tourism and to preserve PGNP, and likewise propel hope for the tourism resurgence of Pagsanjan as a source of livelihood to generations of Filipinos.

Held at the Municipal Hall of Pagsanjan, Laguna, Cavinti Mayor Arrantlee R. Arroyo, Lumban Mayor Rolando G. Ubatay, and Pagsanjan Mayor Cesar V. Areza signed the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) where Laguna Governor Ramil Hernandez and DOT-CALABARZON Regional Director Marites Castro served as witnesses.

"It has been said that a person's will is like water. It is unstoppable. It will pass through mountains like a waterfall - like the Pagsanjan Falls - and it will always get to where it needs to go. It will find a way. What I see today, in the signing of this Memorandum of Agreement among the three local government units with the support of the provincial government, is the sheer will and strength of spirit of the people of Laguna that refuse to be defeated by the many crises, difficulties, challenges and even the passing of time; all these in your determination to value that which God has given and that which has been a source of livelihood for the people of the three municipalities, and for the province — Pagsanjan Falls," Secretary Frasco said in her keynote message.

In the same event, the tourism chief also administered the oath of the members of the newly formed Pagsanjan, Cavinti, and Lumban (PACALUM) Tourism Council, which will jointly oversee the operation and regulation of the development and management of tourism activities within the river's two-kilometer stretch, which passes through 16 barangays. The local communities, in turn, are expected to reap economic benefits from the sharing of profits from income collected from its activities.

30 years in the making

The first tripartite agreement signed by the three towns happened 30 years ago, on July 19, 1993.

According to Pagsanjan Mayor Areza, around 2,000 boatmen were able to sustain the education of their children that time, when tours around the famed Pagsanjan waterfalls has been in demand among travelers. However, as local tourism weakened, it affected the livelihood of their tourism workers.

"Isang [oportunidad] na maitulak ang kasaganahan na ibinibigay ng Pagsanjan Falls. Congratulations sa ating lahat dahil sa aming mga lagda sa kasunduang ito, ating ipinagtitibay ang ating pagtutulungan at pagdadamayan na itaas at patatagin ng ating Memorandum of Agreement dahil ito ang magbibigay ng magandang bukas sa ating mga kababayan," he said.

The mayor likewise expressed his gratitude to the Secretary as well as to the entire Department for taking the lead in such a historic event, thus, announcing that his family will be donating a 500sqm land in Laguna's capital, Calamba, for the regional operations of the DOT.

Both the mayors of Cavinti and Lumban also expressed their appreciation to the DOT as well as their individual commitment for tourism to flourish in their respective towns.

"Isa pong pagmamalaki at karangalan na ngayon pong araw na ito ay muli po nating maipagpapatuloy ang muling pagkakaibigan ng bayan ng Pagsanjan, bayan ng Cavinti, at ng bayan po ng Lumban. Isa pong pagmamalaki na ngayon po ang simula ng muli po naming pagtutulungan para mapangalagaan at maipagmalaki po muli natin ang ating minamahal na talon," Arroyo said.

"Kaya muli po ang pagkakapit-kapit kamay natin ay ang pagkakaisa ng tatlong bayan para umangat ang turismo. Ito po ay aangat muli sa pamamagitan ng pagkakaisa po ng lahat, hindi lamang ng tatlong bayan, kundi karatig bayan, para po mailapit sa atin pong mga local tourists at mga foreign tourists na magpunta rito sa ating bayan para po lalong lumaki ang kita ng Pagsanjan Falls, at tulong-tulong po tayo, pagkakaisa, kapit-kamay para lalo po tayong umunlad," Ubatay said.

For his part, Laguna Governor Hernandez saw the gathering as a symbol of unity for the province, noting that Pagsanjan Falls is not just a tourist destination, but a part of history for every Lagunense.

"Sa pagkakaisa ng tatlong bayan– Pagsanjan, Cavinti, at Lumban–kasama na ang Pamahalaang Panlalawigan at Department of Tourism--ay nakabuo tayo ng kasunduan na magbibigay sa atin ng pantay-pantay at makatarungang benepisyo sa ating ekonomiya, sa ating mga bangkero, at sa kagalingan ng kapaligirang sumasamo sa makulay at makasaysayang talon," he said.

"Ito ay mga ginintuang sandali sa kasaysayan bilang panahon na namayani ang kahinahunan sa isip, pagmamahal sa bayan at pag-asa sa muling pagsibol ng programa sa turismo na magbubuklod sa ating lahat tungo sa kaunlaran," the governor added.

More tourism projects for Laguna

To further equalize development of tourism in Laguna, the tourism chief also announced the establishment of a tourist rest area (TRA) in another neighboring town Bay, the revival

of the old Pagsanjan Resort which will be through a private-public partnership under the DOT's infrastructure and enterprise arm, and donating more boats for the Pagsanjan boatmen.

"Our President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr, articulated that under his administration, tourism is a priority. And that one of the objectives of the Department of Tourism under the National Tourism Development Plan is to equalize tourism promotions and development. This means to not only concentrate our efforts on the already successful and well-known destinations at present, but also to lend our hand of collaboration to the emerging tourist destinations where we can provide equal opportunities for tourism development, so that no one is left behind in the resurgence of tourism for the Philippines," she said.

Education grants for Pagsanjan boatmen children

Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Philippines Chapter chair Maria Paz Alberto also came to witness the event. Last month, PATA held a fund-raising fashion show gala for its 50th founding anniversary to help restore and rebuild communities around Pagsanjan waterfalls. Secretary Frasco, together with her husband Deputy House Speaker Duke then pledged P200,000 from their personal funds to support the education of Pagsanjan boatmen's children.

The tourism chief underscored that apart from helping tourism flourish again to its former glory primarily in the towns of Pagsanjan, Cavinti, and Lumban, she said the DOT is in full support of PATA's advocacy on tourism education, thus, their personal donation.

She said such an advocacy is close to her heart, recalling how their initiative from Liloan town in Cebu started only with a few scholars in 2008, and now has around 16,000 students benefiting from their personal advocacy by putting education at a premium across the 5th District of Cebu.

During the event, the tourism chief personally handed over their personal donation in cash.

With Pagsanjan's proximity to Metro Manila, PATA identified the attraction as a tourist magnet particularly for the South Korean foreign market which is currently the top source of international arrivals for the Philippines. ***DOT***

Heritage and Arts Tours in San Juan City get support from DOT

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco committed to join hands with the local government of San Juan in preserving and promoting the city's heritage and historical sites and to further advance the country's tourism industry during the commemoration of the 125th Philippine Independence Day at the Pinaglabanan Memorial Shrine in San Juan, Manila last June 12.

In their separate speeches, Secretary Frasco along with San Juan Mayor Francis Zamora pledged their collaboration after the ceremonial wreath-laying and offering of flowers at the Spirit of Pinaglabanan.

"*Today's theme is Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan. K-K-K. Wagering a different battle at a different time, with different personalities. Centuries ago, the Filipinos fought for freedom from colonizers, now we are free and yet the fight continues. Together, we shall move towards a future, where every Filipino is given an opportunity to succeed. Where every Filipino family is given an opportunity to live a decent life under the Administration of our President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr., who envisions such economic prosperity for our nation,*" said the tourism chief.

"However varied we are in terms of the dialects that we have all over the country, our geographical locations across our archipelagic nation, we have our unity as Filipinos, the commonalities of our history, our common aspirations, our perseverance, our resilience, and most of all our strength of spirit," added Secretary Frasco.

Secretary Frasco also said that the ceremony is a reminder of the significance of the strength of spirit of the Filipinos where the first battle of the Philippine Revolution occurred against the Spanish colonizers.

Other officials who joined the ceremonies were Congresswoman Ysabel Maria Zamora, National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) Chief Restoration Architect Reynaldo Lita, Mayor Zamora's wife Keri Zamora, and Philippine National Police (PNP) Eastern Police District Director Police Brigadier General Wilson Asueta, San Juan City Police chief Col. Allan Reglos, and other city government officials.

Hop-On Hop-Off in San Juan

Meanwhile, Mayor Zamora thanked Secretary Frasco for assisting the local government of San Juan for its planned inclusion in the Hop-On Hop-Off tour which will feature historical sites and art galleries as tourist attractions all throughout the metro.

"Ako'y lubos na nagpapasalamat sa ating panauhing pandangal, kalihim Christina Garcia Frasco sapagkat

bilang kalihim ng Kagawaran ng Turismo, ay alam ko po na napakalaki ng kanyang maitutulong upang lalong makilala ng mga Filipino sa ating bansa at sa ibayong dagat at ganun din ng mga dayuhan ang kahalagahan ng sagradong lugar na ito." Mayor Zamora said in his speech.

Last May, the DOT launched the Hop-On Hop-Off program that seeks to provide tourists–particularly group travelers and fully independent individual travelers (FITs)–with convenience and flexibility on when and how they will tour a destination through a seamless, contactless transport and tour booking system. San Juan's inclusion in this program is said to bolster the cultural, arts, and historical portfolio of the country as it will also feature the 140-year-old historic underground tunnel beneath the Pinaglabanan Memorial Shrine, the El Deposito tunnel.

"This provides a massive potential for tourism development and education among our fellow Filipinos and our friends from around the world about the history and the heritage of the Filipino people as well as the bravery of our heroes who fought for the freedoms that we enjoy today. On behalf of the DOT and under the administration of our president Ferdinand Bongbong Marcos Jr., we are here to fully support the initiatives of the local government of San Juan." Frasco added.

The El Deposito tunnel was the country's first water reservoir and is one of the oldest and largest remaining Spanish artifacts recently excavated in the country. Currently, the tunnel is a popular destination for educational institutions as hundreds of buses filled with students for field trips and educational tours visit the place. ***DOT***

DOT eyes increased arrivals from Cambodia

Phnom Penh - In a bid to further the relations between the Republic of the Philippines and the Kingdom of Cambodia, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and Cambodian Tourism Minister Dr. Thong Khon engaged in a bilateral meeting last June 15 on the sidelines of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Commission meetings and discussion held in the capital of Cambodia.

Noting that the Kingdom of Cambodia is a vital partner for tourism development for the Philippines, Secretary Frasco broached possible areas of collaboration particularly in the aspect of heritage conservation, management, and monitoring. Cambodia is known for its three sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

"We greatly value the long-standing relationship between the Kingdom of Cambodia and the Republic of the Philippines as we welcome sixty-six years of our diplomatic relations. At the same time, we commend the Kingdom of Cambodia for your great success especially in terms of heritage conservation and management, and your ability to, on one hand, develop the tourism industry upon the strength of your heritage sites and all the other hand, ensure sustainability. Therefore, the Philippines is very interested in collaborating with Cambodia for purposes of developing joint efforts and exchange of best practices as far as heritage conservation and management." said Secretary Frasco.

During the meeting, the tourism chief underscored the strength of the Philippines in Education Tourism, particularly, its English as a Second Language (ESL) program.

"We also recognize the great strides with which you had implemented the ASEAN -Mutual Recognition Arrangement on Tourism Professionals (MRA-TP) and we compliment the efforts you have made in upskilling your tourism workers. This is a priority as well for the Philippine government; therefore, we would be interested in exploring how we can work together in further developing our tourism manpower. In addition to that, we would be very happy to work with you as far as our ESL program," said the tourism chief.

"The Philippines has a very strong faculty for the English language, and we have a well-developed ESL program in the country. This is something we would love to be able to work with you on even as we are also interested in exploring how we may be able to work together in terms of medical tourism," added Secretary Frasco.

The two ministers agreed on the need to prioritize air access and route development between the two countries.

In 2016, the Philippines signed an implementation program for tourism cooperation Memorandum of Understanding with Cambodia. During the meeting, Tourism Secretary Frasco formally conveyed The Philippines' acceptance of Cambodia's desire to renew the agreement which was positively received by Minister Khon.

"As I understand, Cambodia is host to over 7000 Filipinos and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the warmth and the love with which you have received the Filipino people. The same treatment awaits you and the people of Cambodia whose tourists numbers we hope to be able to grow with the signing of our implementation program," said Secretary Frasco. ***DOT***

PHL elected UNWTO General Assembly VP, nabs Commission for East Asia and the Pacific Chairmanship

Phnom Penh - The Philippines, represented by Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, was elected Vice President of the 25th General Assembly of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in the election proceedings held at the Sokha Hotel in Cambodia last June 16.

The last time the Philippines held the position was in 1999 or 24 years ago.

The election took place during the 55th Meeting of the UNWTO Regional Commission for East Asia and the Pacific where the Philippines was also elected as Chair of the Commission for East Asia and the Pacific. As the new chair of the said commission, the country will preside over the meetings to tackle concerns within the region. The candidature of the Philippines was uncontested.

Speaking before UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, fellow tourism ministers including H.E. Thong Khon of the Ministry of Tourism of Cambodia; H.E. Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno of the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy of Indonesia; H.E. Abdulla Mausoom of the Ministry of Tourism of Maldives; and H.E. King Sing Tiong of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, And Culture, Deputy Speaker Representative Duke Frasco and Ambassador Maria Amelita C. Aquino of the Philippine Embassy in Cambodia, along with Vice Ministers, tourism leaders, and UNWTO delegates from member and associate countries, Secretary Frasco conveyed the country's readiness to take a primary role in the international tourism scene.

"The vision of our President is for the Philippines to become a tourism powerhouse in Asia. We cannot wait to partner and collaborate with all of you as we usher in a golden era of tourism for our regions to become the tourism powerhouse regions in the world," said Tourism Secretary Frasco.

"We are beyond grateful as we welcome this opportunity to present our best to the world and for all the member states and affiliates of the UNWTO to be re-introduced to the Philippines- a nation steeped in culture, heritage, and tradition, driven by a young population that is modern with a talent for innovation and entrepreneurship, anchored by our love for country, our sense family and community, our abiding faith, and our willingness to go the extra mile to treat everyone we meet, as we welcome them into our homes, with gracious hospitality, as we are blessed with an abundance of immensely beautiful natural resources across our 7,641 islands," Secretary Frasco tells the tourism executives and delegates present during her speech.

Cebu, Philippines to host the next UNWTO meeting

As chair, the Philippines will host the Joint Commission Meeting of the Commission for East Asia and the Pacific, and the Commission for South Asia in 2024. The event is expected to gather some 300 delegates from the said regions of the world.

In his speech, UNWTO Secretary-General Pololikashvili lauded the "very impressive" efforts made by the Philippines to hold a dinner reception to conclude the commission meetings in Phnom Penh giving delegates a preview of the Philippines' hosting in Cebu.

"I was an Ambassador in my country for eight years, Secretary Christina, I know it is difficult to organize this kind of event in other countries, but you know, this is very impressive, congratulations and we are very very excited and looking forward and I can't imagine what you will do in your beautiful country," enthused Secretary-General Pololikashvili.

Celebrating DOT's Golden Anniversary Aptly

The Department's election to the UNWTO may be considered as timely testament and honor to the half-a-century of DOT's existence which strategically situates the Philippines toward a more primary position and prominence in the international tourism arena.

The DOT is celebrating its 50th founding anniversary this year. To recall, the Department is an offshoot of the former Department of Trade and Tourism, which in 1973 was crafted by President Ferdinand E. Marcos to be what we now know as the Department of Tourism separating it from its precursor.

"Our election as Vice President and Chair of the UNWTO General Assembly and the Commission for East Asia and the Pacific, respectively, only affirms our sincere intention to seriously and purposely put the Philippines in the limelight of the global tourism industry. We take this opportunity to help focus the eyes of the world to our country and hopefully bring their attention to the interesting attractions and destinations that await them when they come and visit us," enthused Secretary Frasco.

Meanwhile, the recent Philippine Statistics Authority data shows that combined tourism revenue from domestic and international visitors amounted to 1.87 trillion pesos with the industry creating 5.35 million tourism-related employment. ***DOT***

Batanes joins UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories

Manila, Philippines - The inclusion of Batanes Islands, through the Batanes Tourism Hospitality Monitoring Center (BTHMC), as the newest member of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) reflects successful sustainability efforts in local destinations in the Philippines.

Department of Tourism (DOT) Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco made the statement following the official announcement by the UNWTO last June 20 evening (Philippine Time) of its inclusion of Batanes Islands in its growing International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories.

Secretary Frasco supported the application of Batanes Islands as an INSTO member by way of a letter to the UNWTO chief dated March 31, 2023, as a formal endorsement through the help of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Embassy of the Philippines in Madrid, Spain.

Batanes Islands, the northernmost part of the Philippines famous for its breathtaking views overlooking the Pacific Ocean, is the first tourist destination in the entire country chosen as an INSTO Network member.

"The Department of Tourism is delighted with the inclusion of Batanes Islands to the highly regarded UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories. We congratulate the Batanes Tourism Hospitality Monitoring Center and thank them for all their efforts at inspiring local destinations to prioritize sustainability as it greatly benefits Philippine Tourism. We hope to add more of our destinations to this global network in the future," Secretary Frasco said, as she emphasized that *"for destinations to thrive until the next generations, sustainability must be at the core of development."*

According to UNWTO's press release, the observatory will be led by the Batanes Tourism Hospitality Monitoring Center (BTHMC)—the research group in-charge of the monitoring of the tourism sustainability on the islands, in collaboration with the province and its local stakeholders, to deliver its commitment to support the sustainable development of tourism based on evidence and a participatory approach. These commitments, according to the special UN agency, are instrumental in building a sustainable and resilient tourism sector that benefits the local people, the Ivatans, as well as visitors, while ensuring environmental and cultural conservation.

"For any destination, measurement is important as it provides a better understanding of where a destination stands and where it wants to go. For a destination like the Batanes Islands, such measurement work is even more relevant as it will help to preserve the uniqueness of the islands and build a responsible sector that benefits the local people and visitors alike. We are very pleased to welcome the Batanes Observatory as a new member of the INSTO network," UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said in a press release.

Though occasionally pummeled by strong typhoons due to its location, Batanes Islands continue to wow tourists with its majestic sceneries at any viewpoint, distinct flora and fauna, not to mention that its traditional houses, including those proclaimed as heritage sites, were built from stones, thus able to withstand challenging weather conditions. The indigenous natives of Batanes, the Ivatans, are also known to be resilient and welcoming people.

At present, there are UNWTO INSTO operating in nations including the United States, Spain, Brazil, Greece, Thailand, and Indonesia, among others, with the highest number of INSTO observatories found in China. ***DOT***

DOT launches Love the Philippines campaign

Manila, Philippines - On the celebration of the golden year of the Department of Tourism (DOT), President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr., together with Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and other officials, led the unveiling of the country's enhanced tourism campaign "Love the Philippines" as the highlight of the Department's 50th founding year celebration at the iconic Manila Hotel, last June 27.

Proudly presenting "Love the Philippines" to a crowd composed of former DOT chiefs, officials and employees of the Department's central and regional offices, heads of government agencies including Cabinet Secretaries, house representatives, tourism stakeholders, and the media, Secretary Frasco described the enhanced campaign as timely for the DOT's golden anniversary celebration.

"As we cap the last fifty years of the DOT and welcome this new era of tourism for the Philippines, it is but right that we welcome this opportunity to reintroduce the Philippines to the world," Secretary Frasco said.

"Love the Philippines goes to the very heart of every single Filipino with the distinct grace and hospitality with which we welcome every guest that comes into our shores, our communities, and our homes. Love the Philippines is a recognition of our natural assets, our long and storied history, our rich culture and diversity," she said, while noting that there is so much more to the country than "the fun and adventure" that has so far been articulated.

"The Philippines is a powerhouse of mega biodiversity, being only one of 18 mega biodiverse countries in the world, a deep well of culture and history, a profound burst and taste of flavor and gastronomy, a tapestry of indigenous peoples and creative communities by whose work of their hands have safeguarded the dignity and integrity of the Filipino identity. This is who we are. These complexities and nuances of the Philippines have yet to be fully articulated to the world for indeed, the story of the Filipino has yet to be fully told, and we shall tell that story by telling them the story of love. Love the Philippines," Secretary Frasco said.

PBBM's unequivocal support

Gracing the milestone event for Philippine tourism, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. expressed his utmost support for "Love the Philippines", saying that the enhanced tourism campaign "springs from the genuine love that you, me, and all of us have for the Philippines."

"And what better way to express that love than by directly incorporating it into our country's newest tourism campaign slogan, Love the Philippines. This new branding which we unveil today, will serve as our guidepost for the Philippine tourism industry moving forward. Allow me then to express my sincerest appreciation to Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco and for the DOT team, because aside from the promotion of the country's tourist destinations, the campaign that you have conceptualized aims to enhance the overall experience of every travel, included in that list of targets are to promote regional products, build more infrastructure for ease of travel, and champion green movements, among others," the President enthused.

Adjusting to the post-pandemic tourism landscape and changing trends

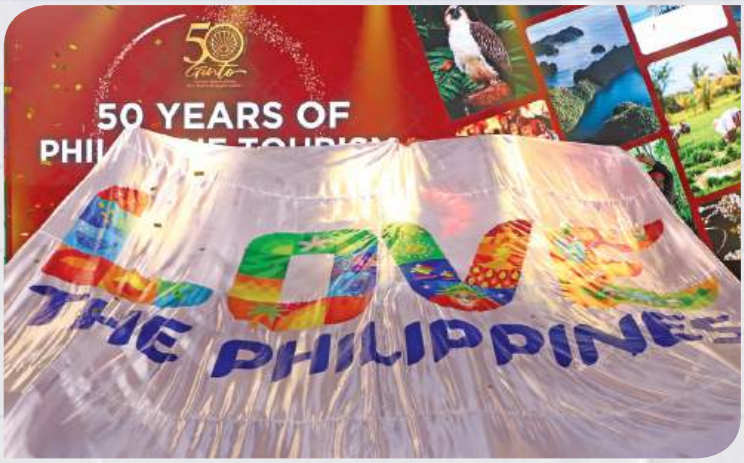
With the ever-changing global tourism landscape post-pandemic, and the growing desire of travelers for more immersive experiences in their travels, the DOT viewed the enhanced brand as a timely response to the demands of the industry.

In a recent survey conducted by the United Nations World Travel Organization (UNWTO) among its member countries, market repositioning, and rebranding strategies are among the priorities identified after the pandemic based on its Survey Findings on Member Priorities for UNWTO program of work 2024-2025.

With an enhanced tourism campaign in tow, the DOT's focus now is to show more of what there is to "Love the Philippines" as it works towards the realization of President Marcos, Jr.'s vision for the country to become a tourism powerhouse in Asia.

"Indeed, if we are to compete with our neighbors in our effort as well to partner with them for Asia to become a powerhouse tourism region in the world, the time has come for us to add to the value proposition of the Philippines by telling the world how much more we have to offer," Secretary Frasco said.

"We have multiple facets of tourism destinations that present a golden opportunity for we have only scratched the surface thus far," she added.



Rosy prospects for Philippine tourism

According to Secretary Frasco, the world has *"the world has noticed that there is so much to love about the Philippines."*

This, as the Philippines has recorded 2,641,993 visitors from January 1 to June 26, 2023, and is close to breaching the 2.65 million arrivals it recorded for 2022.

Further, the tourism sector is regarded as a stalwart as far as contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) is concerned. According to the 2022 Philippine Tourism Satellite Accounts (PTSA) the Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA) share of the sector to the Philippine economy, as measured by the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), was estimated at 6.2 percent and amounted to PHP 1.38 trillion in 2022.

The Philippines is also seeing a boost in tourism-related enterprise employment, with 5.35 million estimated tourism employment last year.

As she rallied their support for the DOT's vision of showcasing the best of the Philippines to the world under the Marcos administration, the Secretary said: "As we usher in this golden era for tourism, for our fellow Filipinos, for our beautiful country, let us find it in our hearts to have that burning pride of place for the Philippines, to Love the Philippines, to usher us into the continued recovery and vigorous comeback of the Philippines to the world." ***DOT***

Golden Year for Philippine Tourism

In a rare and memorable occasion to celebrate the 50th founding anniversary of the Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT), Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco warmly welcomed former department chiefs who came in attendance in the reception held last June 27 at the iconic Manila Hotel.

Joining government leaders, DOT officials, employees from the central and regional offices, house members, tourism stakeholders, and members of the media were former Secretaries Alberto Lim (2010-2011), Wanda Corazon Tulfo-Teo (2016-2018), Richard Gordon (2001-2004), Roberto P. Pagdanganan (2004), Gemma Cruz-Araneta (1998-2001), Rafael Alunan III (1991-1992), Vicente J. Carlos (1992-1995), and siblings Reggie and Aida representing the late Jose Aspiras (1973-1986.)

Delivering her opening remarks at the 50th founding anniversary celebration of the Department of Tourism (DOT) held Tuesday (June 27) at the Manila Hotel Tent City, Undersecretary for Legal and Special Concerns and Chief of Staff Atty. Mae Elaine T. Bathan looked back at the milestones the Department has achieved during the past fifty years, noting how these shaped the future of the Philippine tourism industry.

"In our Golden Jubilee today, we applaud and look back at our accomplishments of the past, which allow us to envision of better and a brighter future that provides us with endless possibilities that will give us a sustainable tourism practice, allow us to invest in infrastructure, develop and diversify our tourism markets and offerings, and strengthen our partnership, to allow us to ensure that in the next 50 years, we can be able to look back and see that the Philippines is where it will be," she said.

Speaking before hundreds of guests composed of DOT officials and employees, other government officials, tourism stakeholders, and members of the media, the Undersecretary also emphasized the importance of the momentous gathering, saying that *"Today's celebration is [a] proof that our resilience and our heart as the Filipino people as well as our spirit and our love for our country is what will propel the tourism industry. It will allow us to discover and relish the beauty of our land and see the limitless potential that lies ahead of us. "*

"May today be the beginning of our march to a stronger sustainable, inclusive Philippine tourism industry," enthused the Undersecretary.

Honoring Former President Ferdinand Marcos, SR.

The Department of Tourism (DOT), through Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco, awards a special plaque of recognition to President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr., to honor his father, the late President Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., for his instrumental contributions to the Philippine tourism industry, primarily the creation of the Department of Tourism 50 years ago.

The late Marcos, Sr. on May 11, 1973, signed Presidential Decree No. 189, which amended the Integrated Reorganization Plan by renaming the Department of Trade and Tourism as the Department of Tourism.

The Presidential Decree primarily mandated the realignment of government efforts toward trade and promotion and tourism development, as well as to tap the country's resources toward an accelerated socio-economic development of the Philippines. **DOT**

50 YEARS OF PHILIPPINE TOURISM

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM
SECRETARIES

50 YEARS OF
PHILIPPINE TOURISM
Manila Hotel, Tent City
27 June 2023

WELCOME
HIS EXCELLENCY
FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
President of the Republic of the Philippines
50 YEARS OF PHILIPPINE TOURISM

Manila Hotel, Tent City
27 June 2025

50 YEARS OF
PHILIPPINE TOURISM

50 YEARS OF
PHILIPPINE TOURISM

"Treasure of SOX" returns to Manila for the fifth consecutive year

A collaboration of different government agencies led by the Department of Tourism (DOT), the three-day travel and trade expo from June 23 to June 25 is hosted by Robinson's Place Manila.

"Throughout this expo, everyone will have the opportunity to explore the richness and diversity of Region 12's cultural heritage, and witness the remarkable talent of its artisans thru the traditional weaving of remarkable textiles. As we step into this fifth edition, we are reminded of the tremendous growth and development that has taken place in the region, making it an emerging hub of trade, tourism, and investment," DOT Undersecretary Shereen Yu-Pamintuan said quoting Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco during the event's opening ceremony Friday.

The Soccsksargen administrative region is made up of the provinces of South Cotabato, Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani and the cities of General Santos, Cotabato, Koronadal, Tacurong and Kidapawan.

According to DOT-Region XII Director Nelia Arina, an estimated 1,439,297 local and foreign visitors stayed overnight in the SOCCKSARGEN region in 2022, making it one of the key destinations of the country.

"Our objective for this event is not only to create a memorable experience for all participants but also to foster a spirit of cooperation and inclusivity. We aim to facilitate meaningful conversations and exchanges that will pave the way for growth, mutual understanding, and sustainable development in the region," the Undersecretary added.

Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) Chief Operating Officer Margarita Nograles expressed her full support to the travel and trade expo, inviting everyone to *"experience SOX in its full glory."* The COO said, *"There is power in your stories. Continue to keep your stories alive. And we in the TPB will work hard to bring your stories to the world,"*describing how this occasion has fostered tourism in Mindanao.

Also in attendance during the opening event on Friday are Governor Datu Pax Ali Mangundadatu of the Province of Sultan Kudarat, DOT Undersecretary Shereen Yu-Pamintuan, OIC Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso, Assistant Secretary Maria Rica Bueno, Director Czarina Zara- Loyola, Philippine Tour Operators Association President Fe Abling-Yu, and Abdul Daya-An of the Agricultural Training Institute of Region. ***DOT***

The DOT's Philippine Experience Program kicks off in Davao; touts readiness of Mindanao for tourism

For the first leg of its flagship program called the Philippine Experience Program Caravan, the Department of Tourism placed the spotlight on promoting Mindanao as a safe and ideal tourist destination among members of the country's diplomatic corps, and tourism groups.

Davao Region, Philippines – The Department of Tourism (DOT) has commenced the regional launches of the The Philippine Experience Program (PEP): Culture, Heritage, and Arts Caravan, its flagship project introduced under the leadership of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco which intends to herald all that is there to love about the Philippines in all aspects of the travel and tourism experience.

Touting the richness of Mindanao's tourism offerings, the DOT for the pilot leg of the PEP last 28-30 June 2023 took members of the country's diplomatic corps in key strategic and opportunity source markets including China, Japan, India, Indonesia, Israel, Malaysia, Chambers of Commerce in Europe and USA, to Davao Region. Heads of tourism associations, other tourism players, and members of the media, were also invited to help draw in positive attention among foreign and local tourists to the region.

"Our President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. articulated from the very start of his administration that tourism is a priority, and that means giving equal opportunities to the farthest reaches of our country, especially Mindanao, so that the people of Mindanao may finally fulfill its very well-deserved tagline as the Land of Promise," Secretary Frasco said.

According to Secretary Frasco during the opening day of the PEP Davao, Mindanao "has unfairly been painted in a certain light" over the years due to skirmishes. This idea about the region, she said, may have been propagated due to prevailing travel advisories of countries upon the region.

In addition to the experiential tour of Davao Region, PEP guests also received a briefing from military personnel for a detailed account of the gains that have been made in terms of peace and order in the region.

"Our intention is to give you the real picture, the actual situation, and the fact that peace and order has long reigned in this region, and the region itself is a viable tourism destination. We hope that not by our words but by the warmth and love of the Filipino people here in Mindanao, the taste, the flavours of the food that you will enjoy, the sights, the sounds of our local communities, the work of our diverse ethnic groups here in this region, as well as the wealth of culture, heritage, and history, you will come to love Mindanao, you will come to love Davao the way we Filipinos do," Secretary Frasco said before members of the country's diplomatic corps.

Reintroducing Mindanao to the world

Under the Marcos administration and through the leadership of Secretary Frasco, the DOT has continuously prioritized the tourism promotion and development of Mindanao, with the region seeing many firsts as far as tourism projects and hosting of key industry events.

Last January, the Department held the inaugural Mindanao Tourism Expo, which brought a total of 69 booths with 41 exhibitors from public and private sectors and other tourism allied services to a three-day event in Davao City.

The DOT entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and Department of National Defense (DND) last May 31 which signified the inter-agency partnership on sustaining peace and order as the bedrock for tourism development in the country.

The tripartite agreement encompasses efforts including the DILG's continued training of tourist police and deployment to key areas, the DND's provision of information on areas ripe for development, and the DOT's interventions on tourism product development and promotions.

This year, the DOT also held a regional launch of its Bisita, Be My Guest (BBMG) Incentive Program in Isulan, Sultan Kudarat, and successfully inaugurated two Tourist Rest Areas in Manolo Fortich in Bukidnon, and the Island Garden City of Samal (IGaCoS).

An inclusive showcase of the country's tourism gems

As earlier announced by Secretary Frasco, the PEP draws inspiration from Cebu's Suroy Suroy Sugbo, a massive, community-based participatory cultural mapping program in all the towns and cities of the province to document their natural and cultural heritage assets which was initiated by Governor Gwendolyn Garcia in 2008.

Anchored on the President's marching orders to foster the Filipino brand that is rooted on the country's rich cultural heritage, the DOT's implementation of the PEP are guided on the following themes: hain/salo-salo, or the Filipinos' spirit of sharing and communal gathering which is part and parcel of gastronomy experience in the country; kalinaw, which means calmness and includes destinations that offer opportunities for deepening one's spirituality and renewing zest for living through wellness; pamana, which translates to heritage, inheritance, and legacy and includes both intangible heritage and living culture experiences such as festivals, as well as cultural sites, objects, and artifacts; and likha, which translates to creation, and covers the country's Creative Cities and emerging art destinations to highlight the creativity of Filipinos.

At each component of the PEP implementation, from preparatory activities, cultural tourism resource inventory and mapping, to caravan development, validation, piloting, up until the launch, the DOT involves stakeholders on the ground, including provincial and government units, culture and arts councils, tour operators/ground handlers, tourism associations, historians, artists, cultural workers, among others.

Discovering Madayaw Davao

For three days, delegates of the PEP immersed in Davao Region's best tourism offerings, cultural heritage sites and assets, living culture and traditions, unique gastronomy and flavors, and natural attractions, following a circuit around Davao City, and through the provinces of Davao del Sur, Davao del Norte, and Davao de Oro.

The guests went to Malagos Garden Resort for a taste of its award-winning tree-to-bar chocolate, and activities including a tour of the Malagos Chocolate Museum, bird feeding dome and butterfly sanctuary, and to the Philippine Eagle Center, which is home to the critically endangered Philippine Eagle and is a vital facility for wildlife conservation in the region.

The PEP also brought guests to Agriya Naturetainment Farm, to get to know more than 60 varieties of bananas that can be found inside Agriya, an 88-hectare agritourism complex development in Panabo, and the Kagikan Museum at Tagum

Delegates were also showered with the warm Filipino hospitality during their visits to some of Davao's world-class accommodation offerings including Waterfront Insular Hotel Davao, Pearl Farm Beach Resort in IGaCoS, and DusitThani Lubi Plantation Resort, further alluding to the national government's confidence in Mindanao's massive potential as a vibrant tourism destination.

Sumptuous local dishes, as well as product presentations of local communities, as well as colorful cultural performances and crafts of the tribes of Davao greeted them during the receptions prepared by the host LGUs at each stop.

The DOT targets to hold more regional launches of the PEP to highlight the country's diverse tourism offerings and to show more of what to love about the Philippines. Tentatively, the Department eyes the launching of the PEP in: the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Regions I (Ilocos Region), III (Central Luzon), VI-A (CALABARZON), V (Bicol Region), VI (Western Visayas), and X (Northern Mindanao) by the last quarter of 2023; Regions II (Cagayan Valley), VII (Central Visayas), and Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) by the first quarter of 2024; and Region VI-B (MIMAROPA), XIII (CARAGA), IX (Zamboanga Peninsula), and XII (SOCCSKSARGEN) by second quarter of next year. ***DOT***

Bisita, Be My Guest grand launch in Western Visayas

It was an afternoon full of colors and music as young cultural dancers welcomed officials from the Department of Tourism (DOT) and from its regional offices, local government of Iloilo, and other stakeholders from the private sector with the Hiligaynon's version of Filipino warmth and hospitality.

This, as they have gathered once again for the regional grand launch of the DOT's online referral tourism program—the Bisita, Be My Guest (BBMG) where Filipinos residing abroad are encouraged to bring home a friend or a family to the Philippines in exchange of grand raffle prizes.

Bringing in the famous Dinagyang Festival into the halls of the Iloilo Convention Center last June 18, dancers wowed guests as well as participants of the ever Central Philippines Tourism Expo (CPTEX) with their heart stopping performance of "Bagani", the official theme song for the Quincentennial Celebrations in the Philippines which likewise celebrates the rich heritage and history of the country from its ancestors.

On the sidelines of the closing ceremony of the Central Philippines Tourism Expo (CPTEX) at Iloilo Convention Center Sunday (June 16), Tourism Undersecretary for Tourism Regulation Coordination and Resource Generation and concurrent Director for Regional Office 7 Shahlimar Hofer Tamano thanked all guests and participants for their presence, noting that the Bisita, Be My Guest (BBMG) is part of the commitment that Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco has made for the recovery and resurgence of the tourism industry.

"Through the initiatives and commitment of Secretary Frasco, we have pushed for engaging and collaborative programs to ensure our country's tourism recovery. We are truly grateful for this partnership with the Department of Migrant Workers headed by Secretary Susan "Toots" Ople Toots and with our partners in the private sector. We look forward to your strong support and working with you in promoting the Philippines," he said.

To recall, Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco earlier expressed her profound gratitude to the stakeholders and officials present during the CPTEX as well as at the regional launch of the BBMG in Western Visayas. She was represented by Tourism Undersecretary for Legal and Special Concerns Mae Elaine Bathan.

Other DOT officials who came in attendance were Undersecretaries Ferdinand "Cocoy Jumapao" and Myra Paz Abubakar; Assistant Secretary Maria Rica Bueno; DOT regional directors as well as directors of the central office, and local chief executives Mayor Ronnie Dadivas of Roxas City, Capiz; Mayor Mateo Hachuela of Dumarao Capiz; Mayor Floribar Bautista of Malay, Aklan; Mayor Jessica Regenio of New Washington, Aklan; and Mayor Elvira Alarcon of Batad, Iloilo. ***DOT***

ON THE GROUND NEWS

Regional News Updates

DOT-Region 2 joins the 240th Founding Anniversary of the Province of Batanes and participates in the Vunung Festival Celebration

By: DOT-2

The Department of Tourism - Region 2 (DOT-Region 2) proudly joined the momentous 240th Founding Anniversary of the Province of Batanes and actively participated in the vibrant Vunung Festival celebration with the theme, "Moving Forward through the Ivatan Culture of Sharing". The event, held in Basco, Batanes, showcased the rich cultural heritage and unique traditions of Batanes, further promoting the province as a must-visit destination in the Philippines.

In her speech, the Honorable Governor Marilou H. Cayco expressed her gratitude and acknowledged the invaluable contributions of various Government Agencies in realizing the vision of the provincial government of Batanes. Governor Cayco particularly emphasized the remarkable efforts and significant role played by the Department of Tourism in bolstering the tourism industry of the province.

Governor Cayco commended DOT-Region 2 for its unwavering support and commitment to the development and promotion of Batanes as a premier tourist destination. She highlighted the Department's initiatives in capacitating the tourism stakeholders and workers while preserving the natural beauty and cultural heritage of the province, and also ensuring sustainable tourism practices.

"Ang sektor ng turismo ang siyang pangunahin nating pinagkukuhanan ng trabaho, hanap buhay, at kita sa ating Probinsiya. Ito ay malaking bahagi ng ating polisiya at stratehiya sa ating patuloy na pagbangon o economic recovery. Kaya naman, isa rin sa ating pangunahing programa ay ang patuloy na pagpapalakas ng turismo lalo na ang pagtataguyod ng sustainable tourism practices. Dahil dito, sa pangunguna ng ating Tourism Office sa pamumuno ni Hegel Valones, nakipag-ugnayan tayo sa Department of Tourism upang matulungan tayo lalo na sa mga pagpapalakas at pagsasanay para sa mga toúr guides, tour operators at iba pang mga tourism players, at workers. Maraming salamat sa napakalaking tulong ng DOT," stated Governor Cayco.

Governon Cayco also shared another historic feat for the province of Batanes for its inclusion in the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories.

"Ikinagagalak ko pong ipaalam na tayo ay isa ng Sustainable Tourism Observatory pa direktang naka atach sa United Nations World Tourism Organization. Tayo po ay nag apply noong 2019 at dahil naipasa na natin ang lahat ng requirements, pormal na

tayong tutulungan ng UP at UNWTO para sa monitoring ng sustainable activities na ikabubuti ng Batanes at ng ating turismo", Governor Cayco added.

DOT-Region 2, under the leadership of Regional Director Troy Alexander Miano, has implemented various programs and projects aimed at strengthening the tourism sector in Batanes. These initiatives include the preservation and promotion of the province's historical sites, and the establishment of strategic partnerships with stakeholders to create more opportunities for local communities.

"We are honored to have been part of the 240th Founding Anniversary of the Province of Batanes and the remarkable Vunung Festival celebration. Batanes is a jewel in the Philippines, and we are committed to continuing our efforts to promote its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage to a wider audience," stated Regional Director Miano.

The Vunung Festival, a highlight of the Founding Anniversary celebration, featured various activities such as traditional dances, float parade, arts and crafts exhibits, and culinary showcases. These events provided visitors with an immersive experience of the province's vibrant culture and traditions, further solidifying Batanes' position as a unique and captivating tourist destination.

The Department of Tourism - Region 2 remains dedicated to its mission of fostering sustainable tourism development in Batanes and throughout the region. By showcasing the province's natural wonders, cultural heritage, and warm hospitality, DOT-Region 2 aims to attract more visitors, stimulate economic growth, and create lasting memories for all who explore the beauty of Batanes. ***DOT***

Department of Tourism Region 2 Celebrates First Post-Pandemic Arrival from Macau, China

By: DOT-2

The Department of Tourism Region 2 (DOT Region 2) proudly welcomed 130 guests aboard Royal Air on June 21, 2023, marking a significant milestone as the first international arrival in the region since the onset of the global pandemic. The event took place at the Cagayan North International Airport (CNIA), located in Lal-lo, Cagayan.

DOT Region 2 officials and staff extended a heartfelt welcome to the guests from Macau, China. To add a touch of local charm, the DOT personnel adorned the guests with exquisite leis made from recycled paper beads sourced from Quezon, Isabela, reflecting the region's commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness.

The welcome reception was made even more memorable with a captivating cultural performance by the talented students of Lal-lo National High School. Their engaging showcase of local culture and creativity truly showcased the rich heritage and artistic flair of the region.

Furthermore, starting from June 21, 2023, Royal Air will be operating international routes from Macau to Lal-lo, as well as local routes connecting Lal-lo to Manila. The international flights will be available every Wednesday and Saturday, offering convenient travel options for visitors and residents alike.

The arrival of Royal Air signifies a moment of renewed hope and resilience for the tourism industry in region 2. As the region begins its journey towards recovery and reinvigoration, this milestone serves as a testament to the collective efforts made to ensure the safety and well-being of both visitors and locals.

The Department of Tourism Region 2 would like to extend its deepest gratitude to Royal Air for their commitment to connecting Macau and Lal-lo, as well as Manila and Lal-lo. These new flight routes will undoubtedly enhance tourism opportunities, promote cultural exchange, and contribute to the economic growth of the region.

As DOT Region 2 embraces the return of international arrivals and the resurgence of domestic tourism, it remains steadfast in its commitment to provide world-class experiences, while prioritizing the health, safety, and well-being of all travelers. ***DOT***

TOURISM RELATED EVENTS

Cruise Alignment Meeting

Courtesy visit of Guimaras Governor Joaquin Carlos Rahman Nava and Guimaras Representative Ma. Lucille Ledesma-Nava

Courtesy visit of Liberatum founder Pablo Ganguli

Courtesy visit of Philippine Financial and Inter-Industry Pride

Central Philippines Tourism Expo

Turnover ceremony of livelihood assistance to Nagpana Minorities Association

Saraotan sa Dalan 2023 in Palawan

125th Philippine Independence Day

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

TO OUR JULY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATORS

1 Rolando Bautista
3 Elenita Pareja
3 Ireneo Reyes
3 Loraine Cervania
4 Aireeze Bautista
4 Louise Jeanne Delica
7 Isabelo Gonzales Jr.
10 Ely Aldea
10 Cesar Navidad
10 Araceli Salem
11 Imelda Garduque
11 Shirley Abad
11 Godofredo Maldonado, Jr.
11 Judilyn Quiachon
14 Julyda Dulay
15 Rex Flores
17 Thelma Gestopa
17 Rowena Sorioso
18 Tanya Rabat-Tan
18 Dwendell Nequinto
18 Teoni Marie Egay
18 Jay-Em Mata
20 Rodel Espares
20 Dee Mandigma
20 Noubert Emmanuel Oliveros
21 Teodoro Casil, Jr.
23 Milagros Say
24 Azalea Peñas
24 Frances Cristie Balayon
25 Rudivito Abbariao
25 Candice Sybille Luzon
26 Irwin Baraan
27 Maria Corazon Jorda-Apo
27 Edilberto Littaua, Jr.
27 Cassandra Sta. Maria
28 Joane Krizzia Delariarte
30 Ismael Arumpac
30 Erwin Silva
30 Jenalyn Adan
30 Clarilaine Pumanes
31 Carolina Uy
31 Luisa Llave
31 Jeffrey Jerome Pugao
31 Kytlin Kyla Principio

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